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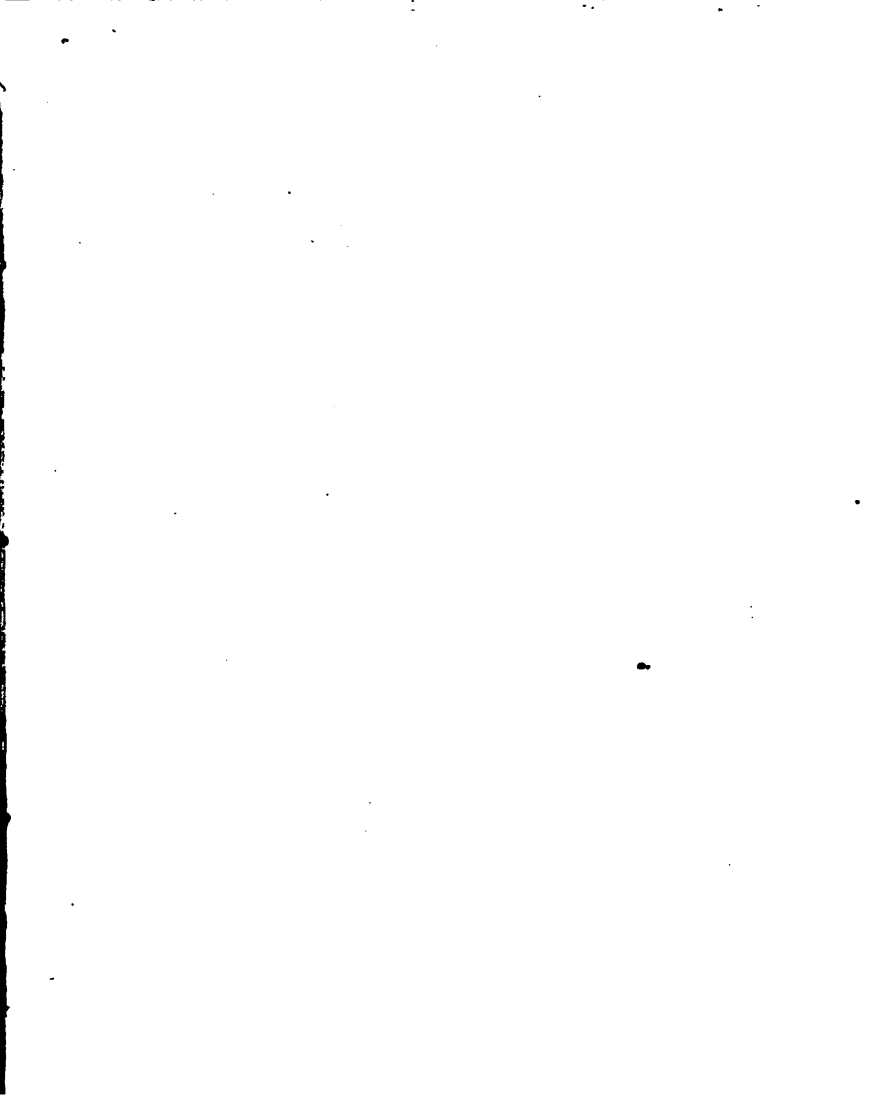
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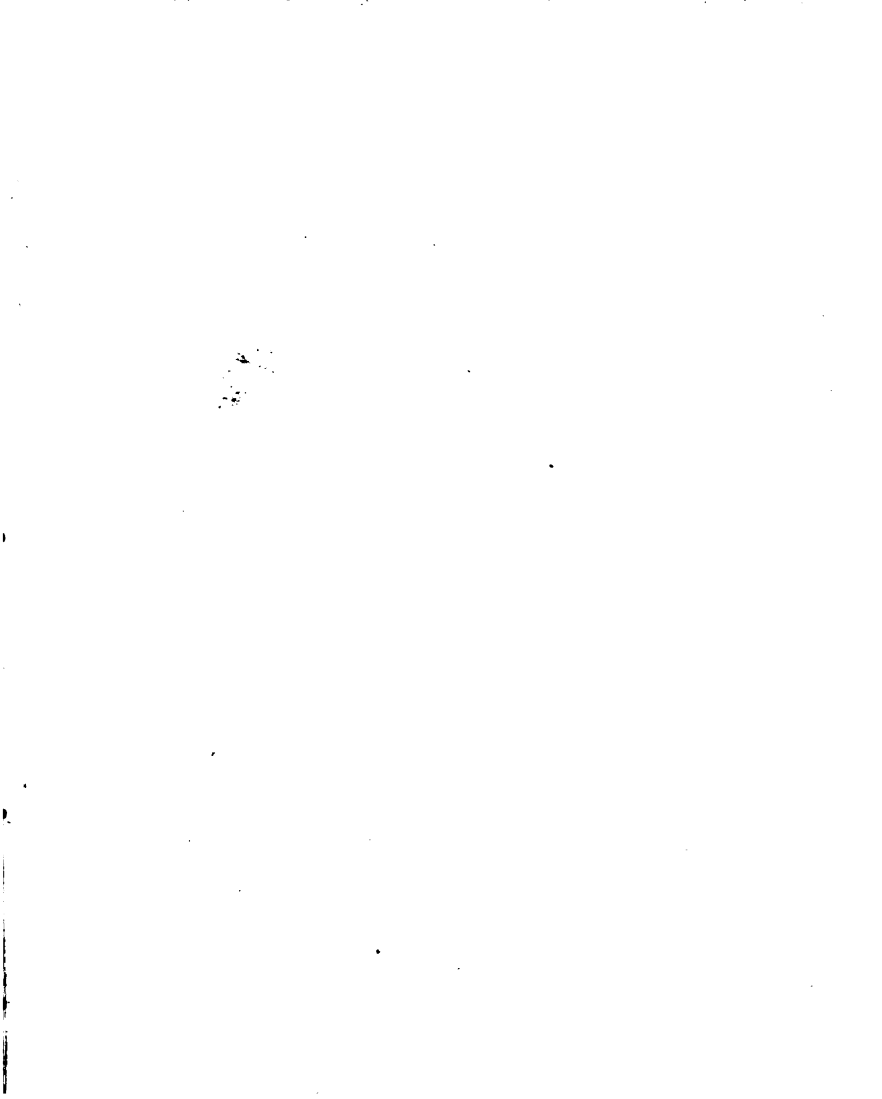
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*W. S. Barnes*

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IN MEMORIAM.

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THE REV. WM. TREAT BURNS.

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BY THE REV. D. H. TAYLOR,

A CLASSMATE.

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1890

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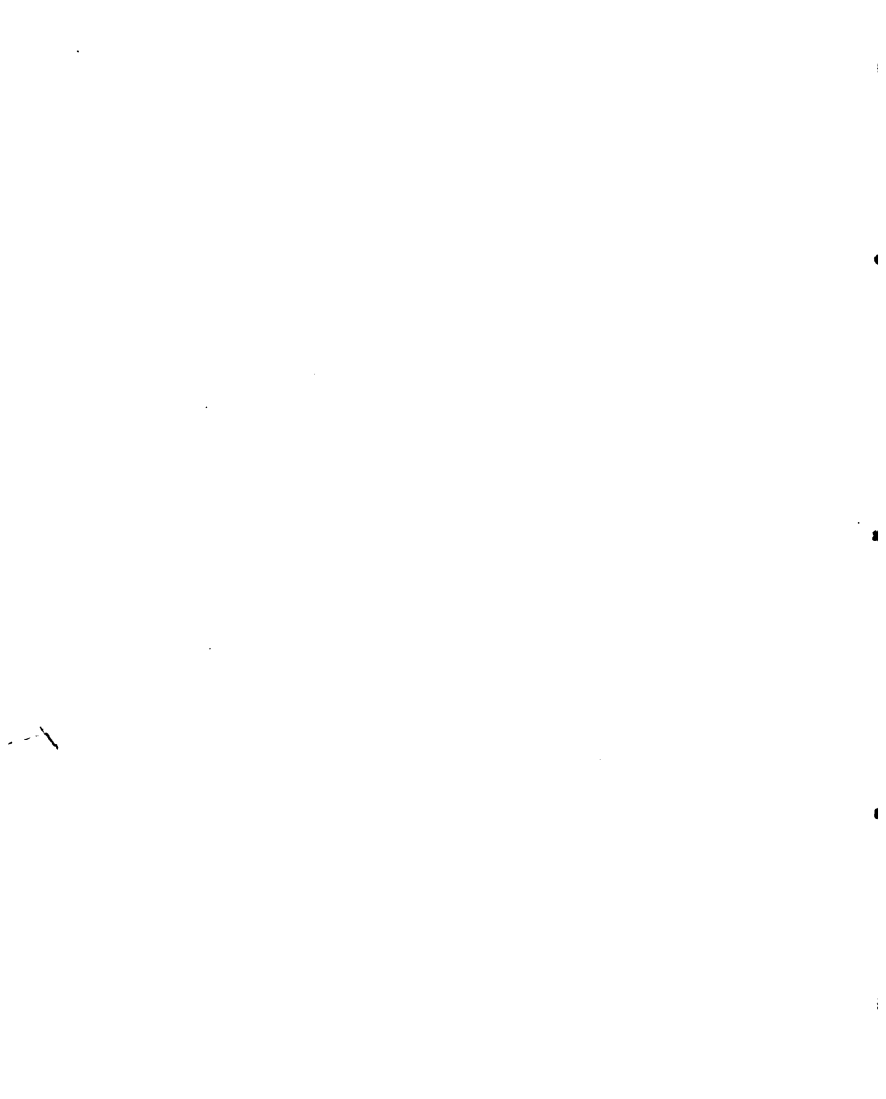
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NOTE.

This sketch was prepared, in the first place, at the invitation of the Boston Baptist Ministers' Conference. Being unable at the time to write it myself, it was composed from my notes and suggestions, by my wife; and was read to the Conference by the Rev. Philip S. Moxom, D. D. It was then published in the *Watchman*, of Boston. I have since had an opportunity to make some additions and slight alterations, and it is now printed by the courtesy of Mr. F. W. Ayer, of Camden, N. J. I have written it for the sake of him whose memory it attempts to preserve; as also for her sake, who sits in the ever-lengthening shadow of her affliction; and for the sake of the children, of whom it is expected that they will be not less noble than their noble father.

Norwich, Conn., Nov. 8th, 1889.

D. H. T.



## WILLIAM TREAT BURNS.

William Treat Burns was born March 14th, 1848, in Milford, Conn. His ancestors for several generations had lived in this pleasant old town, and are remembered as contributing to its social forces in no stinted measure that sturdy quality of character, which constitutes the strength and durability of so many New England communities.

We are not accustomed in our country to laying much stress upon ancestry. It is rather the fashion to assume that each person, by using and displaying his individual qualities, and by developing them in combat with the peculiar circumstances which surround him, is to stand or fall on his own merits, without reference to the personal qualities and character of his ancestors. But the laws of heredity are not to be gainsaid, and the person who is the heir of generations of strong, temperate, God-fearing progenitors has an inheritance, the value of which can scarcely be

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computed. Of such an inheritance Mr. Burns was the fortunate possessor. As we recall the striking features of his character we will find that they answer to prototypes appearing in clear lines in the character of his parents and grandparents.

The paternal grandfather of W. T. Burns was a shoemaker by trade, and he brought up his four sons to the same occupation. They were steady and assiduous workers, applying themselves to their vocation, and providing comfortably for their large families. From their persistent industry, no doubt, Burns inherited that untiring application to work, which was his most marked characteristic. The Tibballs family, to which Burns' mother belonged, were also old residents of Milford. That they were lovers of books is indicated by the fact that one of Burns' uncles, Mr. N. Tibballs, has been for many years a noted publisher and book-seller in New York. Through his mother, perhaps, Burns inherited his great fondness for books, as well as an insight into deep spiritual truths; for that mother was a woman of keen intellect, a careful student of the Bible, a devoted and spiritual-minded Christian. She not only read the Holy Scriptures for herself, but, like Eunice, the mother of Timothy, she instructed her boy in the knowledge of them, so that from his youth he showed a remarkable familiarity with the Word of God.

Under influences for good so clearly marked as these, our brother began his strong, busy, beautiful, though short, life. In after years it was one of his delights to spend a day or two, snatched from incessant toil, in Milford, rowing or fishing or resting among the scenes of his boyhood and with the friends and relatives whom he loved.

When William was about ten years old his father removed with his family to New York City. To the eager boy the metropolis was an El Dorado, and during the five years passed in the city his vision was set steadily toward its manifold chances for advancement. He was ambitious; he meant to win; he had no intention of occupying a place among the insignificant. Conscious of his budding powers, feeling the thrill of their hourly unfolding strength, he proposed in his boyish heart to do great things. His parents kept him at school; but he had surplus energy, and for this he sought other employment. For two or three years he took his place regularly every afternoon in the line of boys who delivered the *Evening Post*. That he did this work faithfully no one will question; though it was under the influence of these associations that he was led into a youthful enterprise which years afterwards his sharp conscience condemned.

In 1864 we follow young Burns, then a lad of sixteen, from New York to Ohio. If he had been a



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year or two older it is more than probable that his native patriotism would have carried him into the army, for those stirring times were charming away the hearts of some of the noblest young men. His youth, however, protected him and held him in reserve for a still grander sacrifice. In Cleveland he joined the Sunday-school of the Second Baptist Church, where there soon came to him that knowledge of his Lord which determined his subsequent career. He was baptized and united with that church, now the Euclid Avenue, March 17th, 1865, three days after his seventeenth birthday. From that time his mind was fixed upon the service of the Lord Jesus. All his zealous ambition was transferred to his new Master, and with his accustomed vigor he began at once to prepare himself for some sphere of Christian service, either as teacher or preacher, to both of which his natural talents were admirably adapted.

His college course was taken at Denison University, Granville, Ohio, from which he graduated in the class of '71. Those were the years when Dr. Sansom Talbot was leaving the impress of his enthusiasm upon the minds of the young men who gathered at Denison, and Burns came from his collegiate work with all his intellectual life aglow with flaming enthusiasm, kindled at the fires of the eager and ambitious spirit of his master.

Coming directly from Denison to Rochester Theological Seminary in 1871, and mingling there with men from other Universities and Colleges, he was at once recognized as a young man of superior ability and acquirements, and from the start took his place as a leader. Though he was one of the youngest men in the class we were compelled by his natural force and manliness to look up to him as to a person of superior experience. He evidently knew how to study accurately. In the class-room, as we soon discovered, he was quite certain to be correct. On controverted points he held his opinion firmly, because he had a good reason for so doing, a reason which he had wrought out at the forge of his own thinking. His class-essays, whether in biblical interpretation, theology, or history, were models of painstaking work. In social life he was joyful and cheering, though his intellectual activity never relaxed. In personal religion he was simple though rational, enthusiastic, but constant. His preaching, even while a student, evinced his inclination to "go to the bottom"; and he never learned, even in his most direct dealings with uneducated people, to be superficial. He delighted to give a reason. His graduating address at the First Baptist Church in Rochester, on Wednesday evening, May 13th, 1874, on "Indifference, the Point of Resistance" was a masterpiece of clear thinking and forceful argument.

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During the three years at the Seminary I remember him as an intense worker, thoroughly conscientious in study, never idle from early morning to late evening. It was a rare pleasure to get him out on fine Saturday afternoons for a walk. Almost his only out-door exercise in those days consisted in a rapid walk every morning and evening to the post-office and back. He was the leader of the singing in the Seminary chapel and in our class meetings; and there are many of the boys to-day who can hear in memory the clear tones of his voice rising higher and higher still as the volume of song increased. Old "Dennis" was one of his favorites. I recall early summer evenings in an upper room of Trevor Hall, where leaning together through an open window and facing the glowing west, in most intimate and never-to-be-forgotten student fellowship, we used to whistle in two parts "Dennis," "Home, Sweet Home," and other gentle airs. Nor can I ever forget a bright winter morning, January 30th, 1874, when Burns came to my room with a telegram which he laid on my table for me to read,—“Invited without a dissenting vote. Salary \$3600.00. Pastorate to begin June. E. Bright, Yonkers.” He was humbled rather than elated; and when we rose from our knees after praying together our faces were wet with tears.

Early in the year preceding his graduation Mr. Burns had been invited to preach to the Warburton Ave. congregation at Yonkers, in the pulpit then recently made vacant by the removal of Dr. Behrends to Cleveland. The place was considered a difficult one to fill. Nevertheless after preaching several sermons, Mr. Burns was invited to the pastorate. He accepted with a deep sense of obligation the work thus offered to him, and entered upon it at once at the close of the Seminary year.

While a student at Denison University, Burns found a place, warm to his instinct for domestic life, at the fireside of Professor Fletcher O. Marsh, afterward for some time acting President of the University. Prof. Marsh was especially interested in the young student on account of his unusual familiarity with the Bible, and the student was attracted to the Professor's home particularly by the motherly housewifery and kindly womanliness of Mrs. Marsh. In this home Burns found also, in the heart of a young girl just blooming into womanhood, the loadstar of his affections, as well as the unfailing comfort of his future days of hardship and pain. This girl was Miss Ella L. Marsh, Prof. Marsh's eldest daughter. Their engagement, which to both of them was as sacred as marriage, was consummated by their marriage, June 2nd, 1874. They immediately settled in a fine home in Yonkers, on a slightly bluff overlooking the Hudson river. In this home

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their eldest son was born; here, too, the young pastor accomplished his first year of public service and also received his first baptism of disappointment.

For the work at Yonkers not only proved to be a very heavy load, but also was so involved by combinations of varied circumstances, perverse to an inexperienced pastor, that at the end of a year, Mr. Burns was seriously questioning whether it was his duty to remain there. It was not the kind of pastorate to which his natural and spiritual qualifications were most thoroughly adapted; it worried him; he could not work easily. Moreover his health which even before he finished the Seminary course had begun to waver, was now trembling in the balance. Accordingly in October, 1875, after sixteen months of service, he withdrew from the Yonkers pastorate and spent the following six months in what he called "resting." He had really taken no rest for several years; for even his vacations had been spent in preaching and pastoral work.

Soon after leaving Yonkers he received a call to Anburn, N. Y., which he felt compelled to decline. But in the following April he accepted a call to the Portland Street Church, Haverhill, Mass., where he spent five happy and fruitful years. His next field was the First Church of Lynn, in which for three years, from 1881 to 1884, he built wisely and well, From Lynn he went to Camden, New Jersey.

At Camden Mr. Burns was remarkably happy and and his work prospered. He soon discovered that he had helpers in the church who were kindred to him in devotion to the Lord. With great earnestness he said to me once:

"I enjoy preaching in Camden. You don't feel as if you had to apologize for the Gospel every time you preach it."

His success was very marked, and showed a growing power to persuade men to believe on and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Referring to Mr. Burns' work in Camden, the Rev. George F. Post, of Meredith, N. Y., writes:

"I was living with my nephew in Camden when Brother Burns settled there. Piety was at a low ebb. But he at once took in the situation, and seemed to view at a glance the entire field upon which he had entered. He first applied himself (under God) to the 'breaking up of the fallow ground,' then sowed the whole field with gospel seed, and pretty soon he could say, 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.' He came to the North Church in Camden like Barnabas to Antioch, 'full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,' and, as in that case, glorious results followed—'Much people was added unto the Lord.' The church was revived, backsliders reclaimed, and converts multiplied. And

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then Brother Burns' ministry in Camden was a real training-school for the younger members, and the older as well. His ministrations and administrations in general, connected with every department of the church work, were elevating and on the ascending scale. He was by no means a well man when he came to Camden, and the climate seemed to be against him, and yet as he stood in the desk he seemed to have Divine support, and the girding of the Spirit. He often made me think of the angel whom John saw standing in the sun proclaiming God's messages to men. He preached Christ and his atoning sacrifice for the world's redemption in a way which impressed us all that he 'sailed by the stars,' and not by the 'compass and chart of popular sentiment or worldly wisdom.' "

He was doing a great work in Camden. Two hundred persons were converted during his pastorate of three years. The church, in a series of resolutions, adopted after his decease\* add still further testimony to the value of his efforts in gathering a permanent church library, and in starting a fund for a new house of worship.

But in the climate of New Jersey and under the pressure of constant work constitutional tendencies, which for a long time had been lurking in his system

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\*See appendix.

and which had been the principal cause of his frequent changes of residence, developed with marked rapidity.

His friends and family were filled with anxiety on his behalf, and added their entreaties to the advice of his physicians that he should seek a different climate and give himself up to several months of absolute rest. Generous friends in Camden would have been glad to make it easy for him to do this; but he did not know what they meant when they talked of rest. The instincts of a true soldier were stronger than the advice of friends. He could not rest away from the tramp of marching feet and the din of sharp conflict with the foes of right. He must be in the thick of the battle. So, when a door was thrown open in Lockport, N. Y., in the spring of 1887, he took his place once more, brave herald of the Gospel, and with no uncertain sound proclaimed the glory of the King so long as he had strength to stand and a voice to speak.

Mr. Burns went to Lockport a sick man and was sick most of the time while there. It is doubtful, indeed, if he saw one well day while with the Lockport church. Nevertheless he went on earnestly with evangelistic work during the winter of '87 and '88, holding meetings nearly every day, and seeing the fruit of his labor in the conversion of a goodly number. And the people appreciated his self-sacrificing zeal;



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they loved him very tenderly, and endeavored in every possible way to lighten his labors and cares. And after his work was finished, when he could stand among them no longer, during the last nine months, when like a strong though tired swimmer he was struggling against the fierce current of disease, this devoted people tenderly cared for his wife and children.

But, alas! it is impossible for the most determined spirit to rise superior to the weakness of the body that cages it; and after a valiant struggle it at last became apparent to Burns himself that he must throw down his arms and submit to the insidious disease which was draining his vitality. In the summer of 1888 the inevitable days came when the faithful but very weary man must lie down. There followed weeks of battling face to face with death. He wanted to live; he had everything to live for. He knew no sullen disgust with life to make him glad to end the struggle and leave the field. His eldest sons, William and Allen, just reaching that age when boys need most a father's guiding hand and paternal counsel; his little daughter Ella, who occupied a place all her own in his large heart, and the baby boy, Howard Fletcher—"a great joy to us all," he wrote; his wife, to whom from the time he first met her in the old college days he was devotedly and constantly attached, and who as he

knew so well felt the need of his strength to lean upon; his church, to whose interests he was thoroughly devoted; and last and greatest his Lord's work, which called for consecrated laborers—all united in urging him to make the most determined effort to live and not to die.

One day during this time of prostration his wife, who could not fail to see that his pure soul was ripening for heaven, said with an expression of anxiety, "I fear you are getting ready to die." "Oh no!" he smiled and answered, "I've never lived yet. I'm just getting ready to live."

It was deeply affecting to hear his own account of a night which he passed about six months before his death. After taking the advice of three prominent physicians, his own doctor came to see him. He asked the doctor to state frankly the result of the consultation and also his personal decision on the case. The doctor told him that there was possibly one chance in a thousand that he would recover, not more than that. In relating the incident Burns said:

"That talk ended I turned over and slept. I had not enjoyed such a night's rest for months, for previous to that I had hardly dared to relax effort long enough to sleep, feeling that so much depended upon my determination to get well. But now that I had done all, I slept sweetly, relying upon God to work

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His will in me. In the morning I woke refreshed, and the doctor detected a decided improvement when he came next. Not that I wanted to die or live, but entirely to confide all to God. Before I had been fearing not to make effort enough to live; now I feared to make too much."

At last, when the physicians in Lockport could hold out no hope of recovery, he resolved that he would go to the City Hospital in Boston. A warm friend, a physician in that city, recommended this course. His friends at home yielded to his desire, and in the early part of October, accompanied by his father, he was carried to Boston. It did not seem possible that he could recover. Nevertheless after a day or two of rest from the fatigue of the journey, and while his friends everywhere were dreading the message that might come at any hour, their fears were turned into rejoicing by his marvelous and rapid convalescence. Still there was slight prospect of his being able to resume pastoral duties, and he therefore decided to sever his connection with his church. The following letter of resignation with editorial comments, reprinted from a Lockport newspaper tell both how much he was loved in Lockport and also what was his high conviction of duty.

"On Sunday morning last the resignation of Rev. W. T. Burns, pastor of the Baptist Church was read

at the close of the morning service. It is well known to our citizens that Mr. Burns has suffered from failing health for many months, and expressions of sympathy have been numerous and constant.

"The resignation was received with the greatest sorrow by the church, and action upon it was deferred till the close of the Wednesday evening prayer meeting.\* The following is the resignation:

Boston, Oct. 14th, 1888.

*To the Lockport Baptist Church:*

MY DEAR, PATIENT PEOPLE—I hand you herewith my resignation. As I do so, our peculiar experience constrains me to a brief review thereof. In response to your call, I entered upon my work with you May 1st, 1887. I did so with great anticipation and enthusiasm. By the help of my people I had laid out beforehand some of the work in my new field. I had scarcely arrived upon the field when my health began to falter. This was an utter surprise and disappointment to me. But from the first your loving sympathy and forbearance were not wanting. You said—"Pastor, do as near nothing as possible till vacation and then see." The end of vacation saw little or no improvement. Wise and loving friends counseled and offered rest for a year. This was a terrible temptation.

By the grace of God, as I still believe, I was able to say "No, I will not drop my work before I have it fairly in hand; something is due to the Lockport Baptist Church." You know how completely the sequel seems to disprove the wisdom of my decision.

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\*See appendix.

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But if there is one decision of my life for which I thank God it is that, because it was not a selfish decision. While the flesh strove hard and cried out for the "rest," the spirit said, "Don't desert your flock." Hence, inscrutable as the Providence may seem, I can still say that I am thankful for that decision above any of my life. As I stand here to-day, face to face with eternity, I wish to say with all the strength that is left me, that all that I value of my past life is what I have done for others; that a selfish life seems unspeakably unworthy and unlovely, and that a life for others is the only life worth living. I take time for this parting word of exhortation in hope that God may use it to impress the same lesson on some other soul, as He is, in these last hours, impressing it on mine. But while the spirit seemed in favor and approved of this decision, all outward things seemed against it. I had not been back from my vacation but two months when you had to grant me another to recover my health. After six weeks of respite last fall, I again took up my work on the second Sunday of December last.

God sealed our united labors (helped as we were by your esteemed former pastor, Brother Hellings) with His blessing.

I shall never cease to thank God for these precious seals of this pastorate, who are now by its instrumentality "in the Lord." But very soon the signs of failing strength began to appear. Promptly, patiently and lovingly you came to my help with the six months' leave of absence. This has only served to show what is God's will concerning our union as pastor and people. It is evident beyond a peradventure that my work here as pastor is done.

Whatever God may have for me in the future, it is clear that for at least a year to come, I can bear no such burden as the care of a large flock like this.

Hence, with full assurance that this is God's will, I hand you this resignation of my office, asking that it take effect immediately. In this connection I cannot forbear to urge upon you the imperative duty of selecting another pastor at the earliest possible day. (I shall put up my daily prayer with you for this.) But while I am no longer your pastor, I and my wife and boys are members in fellowship with you. Such will probably be our relations for some months to come. I shall therefore keep leaning on your loving sympathy and fellowship and prayers.

And now my dear long-suffering people—farewell. I have no words left in which to tell you how much I thank you for all your partnership in love and labor and patience. Yours has been a peculiarly trying experience in the change of pastors.

But while the under-shepherd comes and goes, let us look to Him who does not “come and go,” to Him who abides by his blessed word, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end.”

Pardon my letter's length. I write out of a full heart. Let me still feel the girding of your prayers to God for me.

My love be with you in Christ Jesus.

Sincerely and affectionately yours,

W. T. BURNS.

Reluctantly, yet with the knowledge that their pastor needed to be released from every slightest feeling of responsibility, the Lockport people accepted the

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resignation, at the same time putting on record their appreciation of his faithfulness.\* And in the meantime Mr. Burns continued to improve. December 3rd he was out of the hospital and had gone to Haverhill, and was able to write :

"I have recovered about my average weight, and my blood has greatly improved in red corpuscles; but my old strength does not come back so promptly. Still I think I can preach again very soon."

The preaching hunger was strong in his heart, and preach he would and did. When he came from the hospital the physicians prescribed six months at least of rest; but he plunged into work again with characteristic energy. The Christmas Sunday he was back with his beloved people in Camden; the next two Sundays he was in the Euclid Avenue pulpit in Cleveland, then East again to West Newton, dashing over the country in mid-winter as if he had never been a stranger to health, though in reality he had just risen from the verge of the grave. At West Newton he preached several Sundays, and with such success that many were converted; both little children and strong men felt the influence of his Christ-like character, and accepted his Christ as their personal Saviour. The church united heartily in giving him a call to its pastorate. He returned to his home in

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\* See appendix.

Lockport, his ardent spirit kindled into flame for the Master's service, and determined to accept the call to Newton, to begin work the first of June. He had already taken the church there into his heart and his mind was full of plans for its prosperity.

By this time, though, the little fund of reserve strength which he had gathered was exhausted; the reaction came; he was weak and sick again. Once and again, as he lay alone, he was overheard praying, "Lord, if I am not to be strong to care for my family and work for Thee, take me *now*." The prayer was to be answered soon.

He was advised, in order to escape the rough lake winds in Lockport, to take a short southern ocean voyage, and he accepted an invitation to visit his brother, Mr. N. H. Burns, in Albany, Texas. So the "precious visit" with wife and children came to an end, they with heavy hearts seeing him depart, he like a brave soldier marching away again to battle with disease. While waiting for the sailing of the steamer from New York he stayed with his sister in Brooklyn, and the visit was a most gracious benediction. All the time he seemed enveloped with an atmosphere of fellowship with his Lord. His Greek Testament was his constant companion; his voice was heard in the hushed accents of prayer. When questioned about his hopes and plans his answer was, "I



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will try to find the mind of Christ." The loving sister who went in and out of his room walked softly, feeling that only with unshod feet should that holy place be entered.

The sea-voyage out and the genial climate of Texas did not bring the hoped-for convalescence. His wasted energies would respond no more to the spur of his will, and, although still cheerful and hopeful, he could not but admit that his strength did not come back. And yet only two days before his death he talked over with his brother's family the prospect of his return to Lockport, and on the same day, May 14th, he wrote that he would surely be well enough to be home by the first of June.

One who made Mr. Burns' acquaintance while he was in Albany, but who saw him frequently during his visit there, writes:

"His short stay here endeared him to us all. Though feeble, he bore himself with great fortitude and courage, cheering his friends with his quiet hopefulness. His bearing was that of a joyous Christian, confidently submitting his will to that of the Master. In the midst of his physical weakness, he maintained a cheerful and contented spirit, anxious to recover his health for the sake of his family and his Master's work, to which he was very much devoted. Yet he was ready for his departure. Indeed, at times, he longed

for the coming of the end, desiring to depart that he might be with Christ. He lived near his Saviour, and delighted to rest his cares upon Him. He had no fears of death. What he desired, was, that the Lord's will should be done. I think he could have said with Lord Bacon: 'Death is a friend of ours; and whosoever is not ready to entertain him is not at home.'

He had not been at Albany many days, when it became evident to him that he could not go to West Newton, and he wrote the committee there withdrawing the acceptance of their call. He was letting go. Following is the letter:

Albany, Texas, April 19th, 1889.

*To the West Newton Baptist Church:*

DEAR BRETHREN—The first five Sundays of this year I spent with you as pulpit supply. Very delightful days they were to me. As the result of our acquaintance during that time; I received from you a unanimous call to the pastorate of the Church.

After taking time to prayerfully consider your call, I found that my health was showing signs of declining. This being the case I could not accept your call, without a full conference with the Church on the subject of my health. Accordingly I met a full representation of the Church and after a long and candid discussion, it was decided that I had better accept the call, as I was disposed to do, but postpone the commencement of my pastorate till the first of June.

Hence, as a *matter of faith*, trusting that God had work for me yet to do, I did accept your call. Since

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then I have been devoting myself exclusively to the effort to improve my health. But I must admit, that so far as human ken can go, I am no better than when I was with you last month. What then is my duty? To me it seems perfectly plain. I cannot longer keep you in ignorance of my condition of health; I cannot ask you to postpone the beginning of my pastorate a single day; already you have been too generous in that particular. I can only ask you, in view of the state of my health, to release me from the acceptance of the call to the pastorate which I should have so joyfully undertaken among you, had it been the will of our beloved Master.

I cannot tell you with what pain and sorrow of heart I write these words. Never have I enjoyed Christian fellowship more than with the people at West Newton. My heart had set great store by the fact that I was coming to live and labor and suffer with that people. Never had I felt that God's Spirit was more closely following my labor with His blessing, and I was looking forward with glad anticipation to the time when I should resume it permanently. But so, beloved, it is not to be. A pastorate at West Newton—at least at present—is not a part of the divine appointment for me, as I had dearly hoped. I must give it up. My health absolutely forbids, and I can only say, "The will of the Lord be done."

For my own part I can never regret the blessed hours spent with you, my would-be people. I only hope that the Master will overrule this to the good of the Church and to each member in particular, that not a particle of harm may come to any. I would especially commend to the motherly care of the Church

those young converts who espoused the name and cause of Jesus while I was with you. He who hath begun a good work in them will carry it on.

I would gladly say more, but my great weakness forbids. May God guide and keep and comfort you all is the prayer of your would-be pastor.

WM. T. BURNS.

Through these last days he longed to be back with his gentle and motherly wife. "My home," he wrote me just before he left it the last time, "is the most comfortable spot on earth and my boys are getting so that they are a great contribution to its enjoyment." The day after he wrote home with so much hope of returning he was not able to leave his bed. On Thursday, the 16th, his temperature rose to 104°, and that evening as the physicans were in consultation at his bedside one of them said, "He is not breathing" The end had come without pain and, we are sure, without fear.

He had reached "home," though it was two weeks before the first of June, a little earlier than he had planned. His Redeemer, instead of his wife, clasped him to His bosom, and no doubt he found it as "ineffably sweet" as he had anticipated, to cast himself "into those dear arms, and upon the beating heart of his precious Saviour." Ten years before, in writing to

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his wife, he had in these very words anticipated that rapturous union with his Lord.

In Lockport, the field of his last earthly labors, his body was laid to rest. In the sweet spring-time, when opening buds spoke of the resurrection, he was committed to mother earth, while flowers and sunlight combined to rob his burial of all that was sombre and suggestive of hopeless grief. "When I die let in the sunshine, and have the flowers," he used to say.

His friends in Lockport remembered this and prepared splendid floral tributes. The platform, from which he had preached, was banked with roses, tulips, lilies and all the spring flowers. The pulpit and stands were draped with mourning, over which rich blossoms were festooned. The choir-balcony was literally filled with fragrant and gorgeous bloom and ferns and palms. At the foot of the pulpit was a floral scroll, in the centre of which was an anchor and crown. Appreciative and comforting words were spoken by the Rev. J. H. Griffith, D. D., of Buffalo, the Rev. Messrs. Cooper and Furbish, of Lockport, and by Mr. Burns' intimate friend, Mr. F. W. Ayer, of Camden.

Such is a brief view of the outer life and circumstances of this true and faithful worker. But to know a man's age and birthplace, the cities where he lived, the schools where he studied, the churches in which

he ministered, the state in which he died, is not to know the man, and to present here any true estimate of William Treat Burns we must take other and deeper insight into the real man.

Time will not permit me more than to name many phases of his character, upon which I should love to dwell. He was a fine mathematician, an excellent linguist, and a remarkably clear writer of good English. Naturally he was a thinker. He had learned, also, to think straight on and out to a conclusion. No metaphysical problem was too abstruse for him. He delighted in untangling the most difficult one; and when he had untangled it his intellectual fingers were sufficiently alert and dexterous to hold the strands and threads apart ever afterward. With him a difficulty once solved was solved forever. And yet his mind was always open to new light and new revelations of old truth. I have often heard him say that he wanted to leave his expressed and written opinions *dated*; for he expected to grow and make progress, and he wanted to feel at liberty to say, "This I believe to-day; I may not have come so far a year ago." At the same time he was always doing his best. He never permitted any work to go from his hand carelessly done.

There are some salient features, however,—such as his striking upright manliness, his sturdy native

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honesty, his deep-seated love for work, his devout piety—which present themselves with special vividness as I recall the character of him whom I so dearly loved.

The first impression which Burns made upon a stranger, and the one which deepened as that stranger became a friend, was that he was "every inch a man." Those qualities of character which are regarded as particularly masculine endowments he possessed in an eminent degree—courage, straightforwardness, fondness for dangerous adventure and athletic sports, absolute and unequivocating truthfulness, those manly attributes which have marked such men as Chalmers, Arnold of Rugby, Daniel Webster, the late Bishop Hannington and others like them. These were especially apparent in the boyhood and youth of our friend.

I recall him so distinctly as I made his acquaintance at Rochester. In stature he was a little above the medium height. He had broad, square shoulders, and a short neck, upon which sat a head round and full, fronted by a forehead wider and more shapely than is given to the common lot of mankind. One could not fail to observe what solid breadth there was in his features from crown to chin. Sitting, standing, or walking, he was always erect. I cannot remember that I ever saw him in a lounging attitude. His step

as he walked was quick and positive. I can almost see him now coming up East avenue on a winter morning, returning from the post-office, where perhaps he had just received a letter from Granville—his happy eyes sparkling, his cheeks ruddy with youthful health, his shoulders thrown back, his fine head tossed up, "every inch a man," as if he felt himself

"The heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," or, what he was in reality, one of the princes of the King's household of faith.

In later years he was the same manly spirit. He knew how to meet men on their own ground, for he was a man himself. An extract from his diary so late as 1887 gives a fair illustration of his straightforward way of dealing with his fellows. They are his own words:

"One man whom I talked with for the better part of an hour last night, and whom I could not budge, except that I did get him to kneel in mere compliance with my request, and whom I prayed for earnestly this morning, went through the strait gate like a shot out of a gun. What a marvelous change! The night before he was rigid and unresponsive as a stone, but to-night he was as supple and manageable as a willow wand. Such evidences of God's willingness to bless, humble and shame me before God."

How simple and strong is his method of dealing



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with men, and with God, as represented in this trifling entry in a book intended for no eye but his own. One could not read it without knowing that a good, simple and manly man wrote it.

All through his life, in every part of it, at college, at church, at home, in business—everywhere he carried with him the consciousness of manly dignity which is every true man's right. A genuine boy with his boys, he yet mingled with them in their sports, studies and employments in such a way as to impress upon them the value of true manliness. As gentle as the gentlest woman when occasion demanded gentleness, it was yet the tenderness of subdued strength. In advocating his own opinions, especially in his earlier years, he exhibited a strong self-reliance, believing and not fearing to stand upon the deliverances of his own judgment.

But the portrait of a face, while it must have some marked trait of character clearly depicted, shows many other places where the touch of the skillful brush has brought out other and only less decidedly marked characteristics. So it is in portraying the character of Burns. I could not paint him without bringing into clear relief his strong manliness, yet we cannot fail to observe with almost equal clearness a certain native honesty and transparency which inevitably suggested the purity of the limpid stream and the

clearness of sparkling jewels. He exhibited a fear of the slightest moral shadowing that is quite unusual. A striking illustration of this spirit of honesty, which could not endure the memory of even a doubtful action may be mentioned—striking indeed, in contrast with the deliverances of the great majority of indolent consciences, but perfectly in keeping with what his friends remember of the whole tenor of his life.

It was mentioned that while a boy in New York he for some time delivered the *Evening Post*. It was a custom among the boys to provide themselves occasionally with pocket money by helping themselves to paper from the pile of waste and selling it. Possibly this seemed all right to the boyish conscience; but to at least one of those boys, when he had grown to Christian manhood, those youthful business transactions took on a different aspect. After Mr. Burns entered the ministry, and at a time when he was without any regular income—in the interim between his leaving Yonkers and settling at Haverhill—this incident of his boyhood came back to his conscience with so much force that he estimated the sum which he had received from the various small sales of waste paper, computed the compound interest on it, and forwarded the amount (about twenty-five dollars) to the proprietor of the *Post*.

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The same quality of conscience was not less evident in dealing with modes and results of thinking. A single sentence may serve to show how, when he had changed his view on a subject, no petty consideration of apparent consistency prevented him from openly stating the change. Four or five years ago he was invited to present a paper before this conference\* upon a topic which was agitating religious thought at that time. He expressed his views with clearness, and backed them with such logical arguments as he believed established his position. The paper produced such an impression that it was requested for publication. This request he declined. Afterward referring to the matter he congratulated himself that the paper had not been printed. He had changed his view of the subject, and added, with characteristic candor and keenness: "I don't know as much now as I did then; I think the logic I used was all right, but I don't think so much of my logic as I used to."

Neither did he fear to declare his opinions with the same unequivocating honesty, even when that declaration might mean ostracism, disagreement with dear friends, and even serious conflict and loss. A friend writes of him: "He fully believed in the principles of prohibition, and for many years gave that cause his sympathies and prayers, and his vote as well. He did not believe in license or taxation in the interest of any

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\*The Boston Baptist Ministers' Conference.

abomination under the sun. I have been in Prohibition conventions where the power of his eloquence was felt in pleading the cause of that party."

It is not possible for me to interpret the full harmony of the sweet and clear and deep notes of his spirit and intellect; but only to catch and reproduce here and there a single strain of the melody. But in speaking the one word, "*work*," I shall sound the deep master tone that formed the basis upon which played all the lighter and sweeter notes that combined to form the perfect harmony of his character. From the earliest years to the latest hours of his life this word "*work*" was ever trembling upon his lips. He seemed inspired by that same spirit that animated the Saviour when He said, "I must work."

Almost as soon as he entered upon his ministry we hear him sounding the note which is the key to all his after life. In a letter referring to President Talbot's death, in the early summer of 1873, he thus comments:

"The lesson of this dispensation of Providence to me is *work*! WORK!! WORK!!! and by the grace of God my life shall show that the lesson has not been in vain. I mean to make loyal and constant service to Christ the supreme end of my life from this day forward. I believe in nothing but work now. Henceforward I trust everything under God to honest, earnest, patient

work. This is the vow I make my Lord, my race, my wife, to let no hour go by without my leaving some record of work, which I shall be willing to meet at the judgment. I am not going to forget that to work unwisely is to defeat my whole plan—or that whatever rest or recreation gives me strength for work is good work itself. Life is short at the very longest, and what shall there be to make the night of death welcome but the consciousness that our day of life has been filled with earnest, honest service to Christ?"

His idea of work was not sentimental or fanciful. Work to him meant doing something definite. In no direction did this show itself more clearly than that in which there is the largest margin for sentimentality, namely, in private religious devotion and culture, and in intellectual application and development. He summed up each week the number of hours which he had devoted to actual study, that he might unflinchingly face, in black and white, the record of what real intellectual progress he had made. He worked, too, at the culture of his spiritual life. It was his custom to observe days of fasting, occupying himself on those occasions in prayer for the spiritual prosperity of his church and for the growth of his own soul. He said, in referring to this practice, that he had not only felt the benefit at once in himself, but also in the quickened life of the church. On Sunday he ate a light

breakfast in his study, rising early to engage in prayer and reading the Bible. He took dinner with his family and then retired to his study, where, after an hour of rest, he gave himself unreservedly to preparation for the evening service.

He read and studied the Bible much. In a letter written twelve years before his death he says:

"I have enjoyed reading the New Testament very much this last month. Shall have read it entirely through by to-morrow. I am convinced that for me I cannot better spend one-half hour a day than in reading one-thirtieth of the whole New Testament. A rapid reading should not require a half hour a day, but for ordinary reading it takes about half an hour. I read all of Mark's Gospel this morning but the first chapter, and I was never more impressed and subdued by the Gospel of Jesus. And yesterday, while reading, the truth of Paul's words, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation,' was borne upon my mind with a meaning and a force that I never felt before. I am convinced that we have not taken counsel enough of this Book of God, that nothing so subdues and sweetens and enlightens as this blessed Book of God. It is indeed 'The power of God unto salvation,' not only to point the way from hell to heaven, but to wean us from ourselves, to order our daily conduct, to help us in our

homes and in all our manifold relations. I believe the words that Jesus speaks: 'They are spirit, and they are life.' The Spirit is in the Word."

The testimony of the Rev. George F. Post, a venerable Christian minister, with whom Mr. Burns spent several weeks when he was unable to work, is a revelation of the way in which one man—how many more are there like him?—toiled upon his knees with the written revelation of the will of God.

"We roomed together during this time," Mr. Post writes. "Then and there I learned the manner of his life with God. He would rise early in the morning and read chapter after chapter; sometimes a whole book in the New Testament. O, how often I have seen him on his knees with an open Bible before him, evidently praying for light and understanding as he read. In all my history I have never known such a Bible reader. It can be said of him with emphasis he 'searched the Scriptures daily,' and consequently like Apollos, he was 'mighty in the Scriptures.' When preaching he could turn to any proof-text without a pause or the least detention."

And while he was so zealous in solitude, he was not less faithful as pastor. His resolute zeal in this sphere of work puts to shame all laggard inactivity. Who ever saw a picture of a faithful pastor more remarkable than this, which I venture to extract from a letter written by Mrs. Burns?

“The vow which he made at Dr. Talbot’s death he kept. He was an incessant worker. Had he been willing to ‘take it easy’ he would doubtless have lived much longer. Repeatedly during the eleven months that he was at work in Lockport, he would get out from his bed, from which he had felt unable to rise all day, and go to a prayer- or a committee-meeting; attend funerals when so weak that he had to sit instead of stand while conducting the services, go to call upon the sick and afflicted when it was all he could do to walk. With a church membership of 550, he managed to call upon nearly all the members who lived in the city. Just before he stopped work he came home after calling all the afternoon and said, ‘If I only have strength for *one more* afternoon’s work I shall have called on all my flock who are in the city;’ but he had not strength for another day’s work.”

His pocket note-book tells of such laborious days as few constitutions could endure, and gives the unmis-takable reason for his powers failing in the very prime of life. Take, for example, these entries selected at random from a journal of pastoral work :

WEEK’S WORK.—2 sermons preached, 1 address, 5 prayer-meetings, 1 wedding, 1 committee-meeting, 18 calls.

WEEK’S WORK.—30 hours’ study, 3 sermons preached, 3 sermons written, 5 prayer-meetings, 41 calls.



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**WEEK'S WORK.**—31 hours' study, 2 sermons preached, 1 sermon written, 2 prayer-meetings, Sunday-school, communion, teachers' meeting, 1 wedding, 33 calls.

**WEEK'S WORK.**—23 to 25 hours' study, 2 sermons preached, 2 sermons prepared, 4 prayer-meetings, 1 wedding, 78 calls.

One might multiply indefinitely examples of these exhausting weeks of labor. And yet after recording such well-spent days this is his comment: "I certainly look and feel like a forlorn hope. But I am in the Master's hands." A man's character must necessarily develop when he is striving incessantly to live the highest life. When to work is the very breath of his nostrils, and when all his work is given to the highest service, it is inevitable that true grandeur of character must result. When his failing health forbade such herculean labors his cry was still that he might be allowed to work! His wife speaking of his iron determination says:

"For two months he preached every Sunday, though obliged to spend most of the week in bed. Many times he preached when I feared he would drop dead in the pulpit. One evening he started for church with Willie [his eldest son] to assist him, but his strength failed on the way, so that he would have fallen in the street had not one of the deacons hastened to his assistance."

"He was always," wrote the Rev. P. A. Nordell, D. D., in the *Examiner*, "a hard and enthusiastic worker, a close and accurate student, an exact and logical thinker, able to grasp and set forth the great facts of life and duty with unusual power and clearness. His tact and good judgment inspired confidence. His genuine sympathy won for him the love of all who knew him best. During the later years of his ministry, as if oppressed by a premonition of a speedy call, he concentrated his strength on the direct work of winning souls, and in this he experienced the joy of great success. This work for the Master, and the subsequent long and brave fight with death, was accompanied by a singularly beautiful ripening and enlargement of his spirit. A natural clinging to life for the sake of wife, children, and service, in nowise prevented a wonderful release of the soul toward God, in whose love and guidance he reposed with sweet and unshaken confidence."

Writing to me a hurried letter only a few weeks before the end of his toilsome days came, he said, "I hope I have a good many years of hard work in me yet." But even as he wrote the beckoning hand of the Master of life was summoning the worker to Himself. He was

"called aside  
From the glad working of his busy life,  
Into the shade and stillness by his heavenly guide."

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This review would be sadly incomplete if I omitted some more specific reference to a strong phase of his personal religious experience. Coupled with an excessively sensitive nature was a sense of his own sinfulness which at times seemed to be almost overwhelming. His most intimate friends wondered at his self-condemnation. The older he grew and the farther he went in the Christian life the deeper was this "sense of sin" and the more he longed after holiness. "I have views of my own sinfulness which have humbled me in the dust," he wrote at the close of one of his busiest days.

The following notes of a prayer, written out apparently very rapidly and found after his death between the leaves of the Book which was his constant companion, disclose the secret of his life. I have felt constrained to let it stand exactly as he wrote it, except to spell out the abbreviations which might prove illegible to some.

### PRAYER FOR HOLINESS.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord, God Almighty, which wast and art and art to come: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created. To Thee, O Lord, our Saviour, we lift our hearts and voices in the new song;

Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kingdom and tongue and people and nation. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing. And Thee, O God, the Holy Spirit, in all the fullness and quickness of Thy power, Thee we invoke, life-giving Holy Dove! Spread over us Thy brooding wings of benediction; warm us and quicken us with the new life, the life which the Son of God gives—aye, the life which the Son of God is, the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. Hast thou not said, 'This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son'?

O thou living God, are we dead men and women alienated from the life of God, or are we living men and women, alive by faith of the Son of God? Without thy Son we are without thy life. Alas, how dead we are; dead to all the solemn realities of experience, dead to our Father in heaven, dead to our Saviour who ever liveth for us, dead to the Spirit, dead to hope, dead to love, dead to faith, dead, twice dead to God and his eternity—dead in trespasses.

Thanks be unto God for that voice which awakes dead sinners from their sleep—awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life! But we are alive, O God, alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Make us to know and feel and show the fulness of life. Quicken. . . . Dwell in us. Abide. . . . Be at home. Take a larger place. Hide not thyself, but manifest thyself. Adorn us with the beauty of that holiness, etc. Pure in heart. . . . Make our vision so clear that we can

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point thee out to others as a real One and a present One . . . that we know what we are talking about. . . . Nearness to Jesus. . . . Wherever we go may we take the name of Jesus. We would not wear our goodness as a Sunday garment, but every day—at home, in the workshop, on the street, in all sorts of companionships, in all sorts of business, in all sorts of weather may we manifest. . . .

Bless our church—preaching—our prayer-meetings—our sunday-school—especially the children—the homes where death has come. As we return from their graves, as we take up our work—soon for us it shall be said, Man [goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets.] Help us to redeem the time. Help us to set our house in order. Help us to lay hold on eternal life by laying hold on the Son of God.

It is not necessary, nor would it be consistent with his conception of an estimate of life, to give the details or to attempt to sum up the results of his work. This would be like undertaking to measure the harvest at the close of the day, when the sower has just thrown aside the seed-basket and lain down to rest. We can, however, say of him with great truth, as was said of Dr. Hackett, a teacher whom he admired and loved: "He did good work for God here, but he will do better work for God there, as he uses his now ransomed powers perfectly, and only for the glory of his Redeemer."

A truer man than William T. Burns, in heart and life and intellect and will, never lived. He was true to his friends, to himself, and to his God. There was not a false note in him. The world is richer for his life, and heaven too; and though here upon the earth the tear-stained faces of loving friends are bowed in loneliness and grief at his departure, up in heaven the bells of welcome peal joyfully and long.

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### RESOLUTIONS

*Adopted by the North Baptist Church of Camden.*

CAMDEN, N. J., May 20, 1889.

DEAR MRS. BURNS:

At a meeting of the North Baptist Church, held after morning service, Sunday, May 19th, 1889, there was manifest a unanimous desire to convey to you some expression of our sympathy with you and your children in the bitter sorrow and sad bereavement which have come upon you in the death of your husband and our former pastor, Rev. William T. Burns:

We feel that your grief is ours and that we too have occasion to mourn.

We regarded Brother Burns as more than an ordinary man; in our experience he was an exceptional pastor.

Recognizing a Divine call to the gospel ministry he seemed to have consecrated himself body and soul to this work and to have brought to it a peculiar fitness of mind and heart rarely found in combination.

To a mind thoroughly disciplined by careful training, and therefore capable of critical analysis and clear presentation of any subject, he joined a heart as tender as a woman's, full of sympathy and love for all man-



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kind. To him every man was a brother, and he "was neighbor" to all in need.

"Rightly dividing the word of truth" he showed himself among us "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," and the results of his labors live after him.

Our church library is a monument to his wisdom and painstaking effort freely expended for all who will to avail themselves of its benefits. Our improved and refurnished session room is a continual reminder of his zeal for the house of the Lord, and it is largely due to his boundless faith and inspiring leadership that we are now actively and harmoniously engaged in the accumulation of a new church edifice fund which bids fair to become an accomplished fact, notwithstanding that, at first, it seemed to many of us too much to more than dream of.

But the results of his ministry among us are not to be measured alone by books or buildings made with hands, for God gave him souls for his hire, and we confidently believe that the crown of his rejoicing to-day contains many living stones gathered in his work here.

We remember him for his manly independence which constrained him at all times to stand for what seemed to him right even though he stood alone.

We remember him for his patient forbearance with those who honestly differed from him.

His ideal of a Christian minister was Christ.

We remember him for his untiring effort to measure up to His standard.

We rejoice with you that he left so goodly a heritage of blessed memories; a silver lining to the darkest cloud which now overshadows you.

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That our Gracious Heavenly Father may make plain unto you and yours all the dispensation of His providence, and that you may ever find Him a present help in every time of need is the prayer of your many friends at the North Church.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the church.

REV. B. F. G. MCGEE,	}	<i>Committee.</i>
C. W. NICHOLS,		
F. W. AYER,		

## RESOLUTIONS

Adopted by the Lockport Baptist Church upon the acceptance  
of Mr. Burns' resignation.

*Whereas*, Our pastor, Rev. W. T. Burns, acting under a deep sense of duty to the Church, and the cause of the Master whom he has so faithfully served for many years, has tendered his resignation of the pastorate of this church, to take effect immediately, and has accompanied such resignation with a letter full of devotion to the church and the great and sacred work of his life : and

*Whereas*, Since the beginning of his pastorate on May 1st, 1887, he has labored much of the time under great disability, and for the last six months been completely prostrated with disease: therefore

*Resolved*, That, yielding to the inevitable and what seems to be the will of the Master, we accept his resignation with the deepest regrets, and in doing so, it is further unanimously

*Resolved*, That the earnest devotion to the church and the cause of Christ shown by our pastor during his long and wearisome sickness; his unyielding purpose and determination to overcome the disease which

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has kept him from active service for the church, calls forth our most profound and heartfelt sympathy, and challenges our highest admiration.

*Resolved*, That the Christian resignation and patience evinced by him during all his severe and trying sickness, his constant trust and confidence in Him who has promised never to leave nor forsake His people, and who said to those He sent out to preach His Gospel: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," show a faithfulness and a courage that strengthens our love for him, and adds much to the precious recollections we shall cherish for him while life shall last.

*Resolved*, That while our pastor may sojourn in a distant city under the tender care and faithful treatment of those to whom he has committed his earthly life, we pray that Divine healing may come to his diseased and weakened body, and the ever-comforting Spirit may dwell in and abide with him, giving him a foretaste of the bliss and glory that await all the Master's faithful servants.

*Resolved*, That we will ever cherish for him an undying affection for the earnest service he has rendered to our church, for the noble work he has accomplished, and for the ceaseless desire he has always shown, in health and in sickness, to do us good and advance the Redeemer's cause among us.

*Resolved*, That we shall remember with peculiar pleasure and lasting obligations, the unselfish and devoted labors of our dear sister, Mrs. W. T. Burns,

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the companion of our beloved pastor, for the good work she has wrought in connection with her afflicted husband's labors among us; and while we declare our deep sympathy for our dear sister in view of the sore affliction of her devoted husband, we shall bear for her a constant and lasting gratitude and affection.

*Resolved,* That a copy of these resolutions be presented to the pastor and his wife, and be entered at length on the minutes of the church.

## RESOLUTIONS

*Adopted by the Lockport Pastors' Union.*

1. The death of our beloved brother and co-laborer, Rev. William T. Burns, in whose precious life so many had an interest, calls forth our tribute of respect and affection. "The memory of the just is blessed."

2. We part with our brother in tender grief, and with a deep sense of loss in such a one called away in the early prime and promise of a consecrated ministry, but in trustful submission to the will of Him who in infinite wisdom, goodness and power "doeth all things well."

3. We are happy to remember and record that during his brief stay with us, we learned to respect him for his ability and love him for his amiability in our goodly fellowship. As a devout, sound, able and faithful preacher and pastor, he will be held in everlasting remembrance. "He being dead yet speaketh."

4. We extend our cordial sympathy to all the bereaved kindred, and especially do we commend in our prayers, his dear family, to the exceeding great and precious promises of the widow's God and the Father of the fatherless. In Christian faith and hope we

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point them forward to the near future, when the Prince of Life shall return, bring back our loved ones from the land of the enemy, and gather us all in the glory of the New Creation, where "the inhabitant shall not say I am sick," neither can they die any more.

5. We will attend the funeral in a body, and we appoint Rev. E. B. Furbish to represent us in some part of the service.

